

Wind, rain cause floods, outages

Church steeple rocked from its foundation

By Randy Weston
The Patriot Ledger

DUXBURY — Parishioners of Holy Family Church on Route 3A spent Friday evening praying their church would survive howling winds that threatened to send the building's 65-foot steeple crashing down.

"Pray, that's about all you can do now," the Rev. William Glenn said. "I just hope there's a steeple in the morning to fix."

The tower, which houses a 4,000-pound bell, was knocked loose from its foundation early Friday afternoon by fierce winds that reached hurricane strength in some places.

The wind and heavy rain knocked down trees, caused widespread power outages and flooded roads and basements throughout the region Friday night.

Part of a roof collapsed in Quincy, flooding four apartments. Wind gusts hit 88 mph at Blue Hill.

In Duxbury, the tall white tower of Holy Family Church swayed back and forth and could be heard creaking through the rain and winds.

On the ground, the Rev. Glenn watched helplessly, joined by the church's architect and engineer. If the steeple fell, it would likely take a portion of the church



Gary Higgins/The Patriot Ledger

Vilma Suits, left, of Weymouth and Janet Ellis, right, of Marstons Mills brace themselves against the strong winds on Hancock Street in Quincy Center on Friday.

with it, they said.

"If it makes it to morning, we'll be OK," said architect Tony DeCastro of the Boston-based firm DeCastro and Nelson.

A crane was scheduled to be brought to the site in the morning. Engineers will decide then if the steeple can be braced

and refitted to its foundation or if it will have to be taken down.

The steeple rises 65 feet from the middle of the cross-shaped brick building. Church custodian Rich Campbell said

he heard loud noises coming from the roof about noon.

"It was kind of a pounding," Campbell said. "It just wasn't the usual creaking."

Neither DeCastro nor engineer Colin Simpson of Boston Building Consultants knew what caused the tower to pull loose from its brackets.

"At this point, we just don't know what happened," Simpson said. "But something is wrong with it."

"A couple of years ago it went through 80 mph winds," DeCastro added.

The church was built in 1988 for \$3 million, which Glenn said is still being paid for by the 2,000 families that belong to the church.

The building and parking lot were blocked through the night. Masses at the church have been cancelled for the weekend. A teen Mass scheduled for Sunday evening will be held at 6:30 p.m. Sunday at St. Ann's Church in Marshfield.

In Scituate, downed power lines slowed firefighters trying to reach a fire at the Egypt Garage on Country Way.

Most of the homes in Carver lost power, while half the homes in Whitman and Norwell had outages. The North River Plaza in Pembroke was forced to close because of an outage at 6 p.m., and sporadic outages were reported in most communities.

In Quincy and other towns, the evaporating snow exposed hundreds of bags of trash, which were swept into the streets to create rivers of garbage.

The rain and winds made for a miserable drive for commuters already stymied by flooded intersections and disabled traffic lights.

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—The Rev. William Glenn

Trees were reported down across a number of roads, including Route 3A at the junction of Route 228.

Towns on the northern tier of the South Shore were spared serious outages.

"All of them (outages) were caused by winds and downed trees or limbs," New England Electric Co. spokesman Mike McCallan said. "In every case, power was restored within 20 minutes."

The power outages also triggered fire and smoke alarms, keeping police and firefighters scrambling to answer calls.

At 6:45 p.m., Tommy Marsters, 16, was sitting in his apartment at 75 Arthur St. in Quincy when he heard water start to drip through the ceiling of a bedroom.

"I got a few pails to catch the water," Marsters said. "Then I heard this 'boom' and water just started pouring in the room."

Deputy Fire Chief Paul O'Connell said firefighters built a funnel to direct the flow of water out a side window.

"There's a lot of water damage," O'Connell said. "The ceiling has collapsed. Four families (from the building) are going to have to relocate for the evening."

Staff reporters Mark Hamblett and Lewis Rice contributed to this story.